



## MEDICARE NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 10, 2000

Contact: HCFA Press Office  
(202) 690-6145

### ***www.medicare.gov*: Improved Web Site Design Makes Medicare Information More Accessible**

Medicare has added new and expanded information about Medicare benefits, nursing home staffing levels, health plan options and other topics to its popular [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) Website, Nancy-Ann DeParle, administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration said today. The changes are part of a major redesign to make the Web site faster and easier to use.

The award-winning Web site, created by HCFA, now includes more features and information tailored to meet the needs of the growing number of older online users as well as family members and others who help them make their health care decisions, including:

- A new site design that makes it easier to find, read and print online information about Medicare, including information on health plan options;
- New information about the number of plan members who have disenrolled from their Medicare+Choice plans. This information is compiled by HCFA and will be updated annually;
- New staffing information for nursing homes across the country which includes the number of registered nurses, licensed practical or vocational nurses and certified nursing assistants in each nursing home; and
- An improved screen reader that allows people with visual disabilities to access the Internet. This tool allows users who have screen reader capabilities to "hear" the words on the screen.

"These improvements to *medicare.gov* represent HCFA's latest commitment to help consumers make more informed health care decisions," said HCFA Administrator Nancy-Ann DeParle. "Older Americans, their friends and their families are tapping into the Web like never before."

The latest Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey showed that Internet access among people with Medicare who are 65 and older has skyrocketed from 6.8 percent in 1997 to 21.3 percent in

-More-

1999. In addition, industry figures on web use indicate that people over the age of 50 represent the largest and fastest growing population on the Internet. They are increasingly using computers and the Internet to search for information on vital issues like health care.

[Www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), which has already won awards for comprehensive content, is one of the websites providing information of interest to older adults. The site averages 7 million hits and 1.3 million page views per month.

HCFA's Web site contains useful information for people with Medicare and anyone involved in helping them with their health care decisions. [Www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) is uniquely designed to provide customized comparative information about Medicare+Choice plans (Medicare Health Plan Compare), nursing homes (Nursing Home Compare), supplemental insurance policies for people with Medicare (Medigap Compare), local events where Medicare is the topic (Local Medicare Events), and resources for additional information (Helpful Contacts).

"The latest upgraded site improvements include easier-to-access health-related information," DeParle said. "In addition, the new technologies we are using means that the page will load faster for people who use their telephone lines to access the Internet, helping them move faster through the site."

"The updated [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) Web site also gives people with Medicare a listing of activities and meetings they can attend in their communities to learn more about their Medicare," said Carol Cronin, director of HCFA's Center for Beneficiary Services. "Right now, there are more than 6,000 activities all around the country posted on the local Medicare events database."

HCFA originally launched [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) in 1998. It is one part of the comprehensive National Medicare Education Program that also includes the *Medicare & You* handbook; 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), HCFA's toll-free telephone line; and partnerships with local and national organizations across the United States.

# # #